

S E R M O N

Preached at the

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O R D I N A T I O N

O F

Mr. S A M U E L W I L T O N,

June 18th, 1766, at LOWER-TOOTING, in SURRY,

By P H I L I P F U R N E A U X.

T O G E T H E R W I T H

An I N T R O D U C T O R Y D I S C O U R S E

By A N D R E W K I P P I S,

Mr. W I L T O N's Confession of Faith,

And A N S W E R S to the Q U E S T I O N S proposed to him

B Y

F R A N C I S S P I L S B U R Y.

A N D L I K E W I S E

A C H A R G E

D E L I V E R E D B Y

S A M U E L M O R T O N S A V A G E, B. D.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. BUCKLAND, and J. PAYNE, in Pater-
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and W. DAVENHILL, at the Lamb in Leadenhall-street.

MDCCLXVI.

S E R M O N

Preached at the

ORDINATION

OF

MR. SAMUEL WILTON.

June 18th. 1766, at Lower-Tooting, Surrey.
By PHILIP FURNACE.

TOGETHER WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE

By ANDREW KIPPS.

MR. WILTON'S Confession of Faith.

And Answers to the Questions proposed to him.

FRANCIS & J. BURY.

AND LIKEWISE

A C O R G E

DEVELOPED BY



SAMUEL MORTON SAVAGE, B. D.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. BUCKLAND, and J. PAVES, in Paternoster-Row; E. GARDNER, in Gracechurch-street; and W. DAVENANT, at the Lamb in Leadenhall-street.

MDCCLXVI.

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Page 1

E R R A T A.

Page 10, line 21, *for* which man, *read* which every man.

Page 12, line 14, *for* self-examination, *read* self-exaltation.

Page 15, line 11, *for* the, *read* their.

S E R M O N

Preached at the

ORDINATION

OF

MR. SAMUEL WILTON.

June 18th. 1766, at Lower-Tooting, Surrey.

S E R M O N

The 1st line is, For which man, were which every man.

The 2d line is, For which nation, were which every nation.

The 3d line is, For the, was there.

FRANCIS 21 LISBURY

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AND LIKEWISE

A C R G E



SAMUEL MORTON SAVAGE, B.D.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. BUCKLAND, and J. PAVNE, in Pall-mall; E. GARDNER, in Grosvenor-street; and W. DAVENANT, at the Lamb in Bread-street.

MDCCLXVI.

THE INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

IF we reflect with any attention, on the ignorant, degenerate, and miserable state of the world before the appearance of our Saviour, and consider the admirable nature of the blessings he came to bestow, we cannot but be sensible that the gospel is the most excellent gift that ever was communicated to mankind; the most excellent gift that could possibly be communicated; and that no words can do justice to its merit. Being therefore, an institution of inestimable value, an institution which conveys knowledge, pardon, holiness, comfort, and eternal life; it was of infinite importance that the remotest parts of the earth, and that all succeeding ages should be acquainted with so great a salvation. This, indeed, was the intention of our heavenly Father, as is manifest from the universal genius and design of christianity, from the prophecies concerning it, from many declarations of the New Testament, and especially, from the promises of our Lord, that the gates of hell or hades, should never prevail against his church, and that he would

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be with his faithful servants always, even unto the end of the world.

Accordingly, our divine Master, after his resurrection, poured out upon his disciples the extraordinary endowments of the Spirit, to enable them to propagate his sacred religion; and though these extraordinary endowments are now ceased, he hath provided, in the ordinary course of his administration, for raising up, and continuing, a set of men to carry on the purposes of his grace and favour to the children of Adam. As “ he gave apostles, prophets, and evangelists” for the exigencies of their own times, so he hath appointed settled “ pastors and teachers” for the benefit of all generations; “ that the saints may be perfected to the work “ of the ministry; that his body, the church, “ may be edified; and that hereby we may “ come in the unity of the faith, and of the “ knowledge of the Son of God, unto the “ perfect man, unto the measure of the stature “ of the fulness of Christ.”

The business of these pastors and teachers is very important: it is no less than the promoting of the grand designs of the gospel salvation; the being instrumental in illuminating, converting, and purifying sinful mortals, and in training them up for eternal glory and blessedness. It is, therefore, an office that ought to be entered upon with the utmost consideration, serious-

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE. 3

seriousness, and solemnity; nor should any one intrude upon it without possessing the suitable qualifications.

If we ask what these qualifications are, we shall find that the first thing necessary in the person who offers himself to the work of the ministry is, that he be himself a sincere believer in Jesus Christ, and that he does most cordially assent to the doctrines of the New Testament, as the only authentic standard of his own faith, in opposition to all human authority. The next thing requisite is, that he be endued with the principles of genuine and fervent piety and goodness; that he should strongly feel the power of the divine truths, and habitually live under the influence of the precepts, examples, and prospects, he undertakes to recommend. A third thing, of the utmost moment, is, that he be furnished with a competent degree of knowledge; with such knowledge, in general, as shall tend to fit him for his sacred employment; and especially, such a knowledge of the Scriptures, and of the whole nature, scheme, and end of the Gospel, as shall render him able to teach others also. It will not be sufficient that he is a sincere and faithful man, unless he be capable likewise, of rightly dividing the word of truth, and of giving to every one his portion of meat in due season. To these several qualifications he should join a devout and serious inclination, and a solemn consecration of himself, to the ministerial

B 2

work.

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work. His heart ought to be touched with compassion, with love, for precious and immortal souls; and he should esteem it his honour, his happiness, his joy, to devote himself to their welfare, and to the interests of his dear Redeemer. When a person is thus fitted, and disposed to serve God in the gospel of his Son, it is still necessary to the regular exercise of the pastoral office, that he be called to it by some congregation, who have chosen him to conduct their worship, to administer the ordinances among them, and to be the helper of their knowledge, holiness, comfort, and salvation.

It is on the circumstances already mentioned, that we lay the stress of the validity of the christian ministry. But, as it is an employment that ought to be entered upon with the greatest solemnity, and as rash and ignorant intruders should be excluded from it as much as possible, it is highly expedient that the man who is going to take upon him the awful charge of the souls of his fellow creatures, should summon his fathers and brethren together, and publicly consecrate himself to the duty of a pastor, in their presence; and with their approbation; seeking their earnest prayers for a blessing on his labours, and asking their pious and faithful instructions, admonitions, and experience, to assist him in the right discharge of his important work. Thus will he be introduced into the service of the church, in the way that is, in every

every respect, regular and compleat; in the way which is agreeable to the directions and practice of the New Testament,

Some, indeed, insist upon it, that ordination must be conferred by the hands of a diocesan bishop, whom they assert to be of an order distinct from, and superior to, common presbyters or pastors, and to have the sole power of delegating persons to the ministerial office. But I can see no foundation for this notion in the Scriptures, the only rule to which I have recourse. I there find, that when Timothy received the gift which was in him, it was accompanied with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; and I there learn that presbyters and bishops are the same office, and that every faithful pastor of a single congregation, is truly a christian bishop. With confidence and pleasure, therefore, do I assert the validity and regularity of ordination, as exercised among the Protestant dissenters. With confidence and pleasure do I assert that it is formed and conducted on the plan laid down by our Lord and his apostles. Are others ministers of Christ? so are we likewise. I will not say that we are more; though it might be alleged in our favour, that we adhere in a stricter manner to the rule of the Gospel; that the people among us have the voluntary choice of their instructors; and that we submit to many disadvantages, in order

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order to maintain the purity of divine worship, and that liberty wherewith Jesus hath made us free.

Satisfied therefore, as we are of the solid and regular foundation of our ministerial calling, we rejoice when fresh candidates offer themselves to the arduous, but sacred, honourable, and delightful work. The prophets, do they live for ever? Alas! we know by repeated experience, that the treasure we enjoy in them, is lodged in earthen vessels, which must soon be broken. We see, in one and another instance, that the persons are removed who were burning and shining lights, and the loss of whose abilities and services we cannot avoid sincerely lamenting. But we are abundantly thankful that our heavenly Father continues to raise up new instruments to the glory of his great name.

We congratulate you the members of this christian society, that after the breach made upon you by the death of your late most excellent and eminent pastor, ye have been led, by the providence and grace of God, to the choice of our worthy brother, whom we most cordially recommend to your esteem and affection. We are satisfied of his sincere belief in the gospel, of his holiness, his knowlege, and the dispositions and views with which he engages in the ministry. We are sensible that he hath been called to discharge it among you by your
free

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free and unanimous voice; and accordingly we are assembled together to receive his solemn dedication of himself to the service of the sanctuary, to pour out our fervent prayers in his behalf, to stir up his pure mind by way of remembrance, and to join in other acts of religion, suitable to the present occasion. We shall add likewise, the ceremony of the imposition of hands, not as pretending to convey any powers by that ceremony, not even as laying a stress upon it; but because it is a primitive custom, because it appears a proper mode of pointing out the person ordained, and because it should seem, from one or two places in the New Testament, to have been practised in the apostolic times, when no extraordinary gifts were conferred.

And now let us be earnestly solicitous to attend upon the holy employments of this day with proper dispositions. Let us not come together merely to gratify our curiosity, and much less to exercise a critical severity about forms of expression, or doctrines of doubtful disputation; but with an ardent desire to promote the temper of christian piety, virtue, and love. God grant, that in consequence of our attendance upon him, the people may be animated with a firmer attachment to the Gospel, and a stronger regard to the faithful ministers of Jesus; and that we, who have consecrated ourselves to the service of never dying souls, may be engaged to

6 discharge

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discharge our sacred work with quickened fidelity, diligence, and fervour ! O ! may the good spirit of our heavenly Father kindle and cherish in every one of our breasts, a divine flame, which shall shine and burn with increasing purity and brightness, through all the days of our mortal life ; and at length, be united to the infinitely purer and brighter fires of devotion, affection, and joy, that shall diffuse an inexpressible splendour throughout the celestial world, for ever and ever ! Amen.

THE

T H E
S E R M O N.

I COR. iv. 1.

LET A MAN SO ACCOUNT OF US AS OF THE
MINISTERS OF CHRIST, AND STEWARDS
OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD:

THE contending parties and factions which distracted the Church of Corinth, owed their rise to the attempts of some judaizing teachers, to incorporate and consolidate the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ into one system; inasmuch as they supposed the former requisite to be observed even by the Gentile converts, in order to their acceptance with God. But being strenuously opposed in this design by the apostle Paul, who was set for the defence of the Gospel against all innovations and corrupt mixtures, and who on all occasions signalized himself in asserting its purity and perfection, its independence on and superiority to the law; which, as the shadow of future good things, was abolished, now the
C substance

substance was come; they thereupon used all their endeavours, by an affected contempt of him, and by the most artful and invidious insinuations against him, to weaken his credit, and impair and sink his reputation among the Corinthians; that they might meet with the less obstruction, in spreading their opinion of the necessity of the observation of the Jewish ritual.

On this account there were two points, which the apostle kept steadily in view; of which the first and principal was to restore and establish among them, the purity and simplicity of the gospel; and then, to vindicate his own character, as a disinterested and faithful apostle and preacher of the gospel, ordained "not of men, nor by men, but by Jesus Christ *," the great head of the church. And this latter he was under strong engagements and obligations to do, not merely from that just regard which man oweth to his own private reputation; but in order that his authority, and consequently his influence and usefulness in the church, might not be utterly ruined, or at least greatly diminished.

It is, indeed, a very difficult task for any man to plead his own cause, to maintain his own just rights, and the integrity of his own views, when they are called in question, with-

* Gal. i. 1.

out the appearance or imputation of vanity or partiality. We have reason therefore to admire the consummate skill and address, with which the apostle toucheth this nice and delicate subject; confessing, with unaffected humility, his own meanness and weakness, as a christian and a minister; and not concealing the natural disadvantages under which he had laboured, in preaching the gospel among them; and taking notice of the plain and artless manner in which he had dispensed divine truth; inferring from hence, as he justly might, notwithstanding his enemies were ready to object it to his dishonour, that the divine energy had signally cooperated with his endeavours, and that their “faith did not stand in the wisdom of men, “but” had been established by “the power” and Spirit “of God*.” After this he taketh courage to assert his apostolical commission and authority in the most express terms: “we are “fellow-labourers, saith he, of God: ye are “God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building†.” And then he cautioneth others, having the judaizing teachers particularly in his eye, to take heed what kind of superstructure they reared on the ground-work he had laid: “according “to the grace of God which is given unto me, “as a wise master-builder,” saith he, “I “have laid the foundation, and another build- “eth thereon. But let every man take heed “how he buildeth thereupon. For other foun-

* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

† 1 Cor. iii. 9.

" dation can no man lay than that is laid,
 " which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man
 " build upon this foundation, gold, silver,
 " precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every
 " man's work shall be made manifest. For
 " the day shall declare it, because it shall be
 " revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every
 " man's work of what sort it is. If any man's
 " work abide, which he hath built thereupon,
 " he shall receive a reward. If any man's
 " work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss, but
 " he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire ||."

But what is it Paul could aim at, might his
 opposers demand, by this undue self-examina-
 tion? as if the very being, at least the success
 and prosperity, of the christian religion solely
 depended on him! Was *he* alone vested with
 Christ's commission and authority? Would *he*
 be sole vicar and delegate of Christ, and su-
 preme head of the church, and so secure the
 implicit faith and obedience of all christians to
 himself? To preclude and obviate all such un-
 fair and uncandid inferences from, and con-
 structions of, what he had just affirmed, of his
 having laid the foundation of the church at Co-
 rinth, and of the necessity of all who succeeded
 him in that work proceeding upon his plan,
 making use of the same materials, and building
 after his stile and manner; he remindeth them,
 that they were " not to glory in men," to

|| 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

boast

boast of any men or ministers above, or to the prejudice or disparagement of, other ministers. "For," saith he, "all things are yours," or for the benefit of christians, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's *:" that is, ministers are ordained for the service of the church, not the church for the aggrandizing of ministers.

All, therefore, which he contended for, was, that he might be acknowledged as a true and genuine apostle and servant of Christ, fully instructed in the scheme of the gospel, and well able to instruct others; the consequence of which was, that without any undue assuming, or arrogance, or setting up himself above others, he might justly expect the labours of those, who came after him in the vineyard, should not be inconsistent and contradictory, but entirely conformable to his. He therefore, in the words of the text, imparteth to them his whole intention, and informeth them in what light they should consider him, and all others, who preached the gospel to them, whether they were more or less acceptable as to their personal endowments: "let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." And

* 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

" dation can no man lay than that is laid,
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* 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

their acting becoming this character, would be a sure and infallible test of the measure of regard and esteem, which they respectively deserved. "For it is required," saith he, "in stewards, that a man be found faithful *." Yet, as all human decisions are liable to error, "it is with me a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not," I pretend not to be supreme and infallible judge over "my ownself; for though I know nothing by," or rather am conscious of no evil or sinister intention, or of any unfaithfulness in "myself, yet am I not hereby" fully and finally "justified:" † I cannot rely on this as an authentic acquittal and absolute discharge: "for he who judgeth me, is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time:" be not so hasty and peremptory in your several opinions and decisions concerning ministers, in condemning one and exalting another; but wait "till the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God ‡:" then shall every minister have that just portion of praise, which his talents and diligence and fidelity have deserved.

This is a succinct, and I apprehend, just and candid view of the reasoning of the apostle in

* 1 Cor. iv. 2. † ver. 3, 4. ‡ ver. 5.

this context ; and though it be strictly and primarily applicable to the inspired apostles, and to other extraordinary ministers of Christ, yet, I can see no sufficient reason for confining it solely to them. The apostle's argument proceedeth upon principles accommodable to the ministers of Christ in all ages, ordinary as well as extraordinary ; allowing for this single circumstance, in which they vary, that the one received the truths and doctrines they were to dispense, from the great Master himself, or by the immediate inspiration of his Spirit ; and the other draw their “ water out of the wells of “ salvation” opened in the Scriptures, out of the fountain of divine revelation. And the apostle seemeth to include not only his fellow-labourers, but all who should build on his foundation, then or in aftertimes ; who are alike to be considered “ as ministers of Christ, “ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” And as far as ordinary ministers appear to the judgments and consciences of men, to dispense the uncorrupted truths of the gospel from the sacred canon, they are plainly intitled to the like esteem and regard with the apostles themselves : they are likewise in this case, to be accounted “ ministers of Christ, and stewards of the “ mysteries of God.” And if the apostles of Christ only claimed the character of *stewards*, surely their successors, whatever be their advantages and endowments, can have no pretence to assume a superior or more lordly character.

Having

Having premised these things, in further speaking to the words of the text, I shall

FIRST. Represent the character which St. Paul claimeth for himself, and all other ministers ordinary and extraordinary.

SECONDLY. I will enquire what this character may be supposed to challenge and deserve, when the apostle saith, Let a man so account of us : and then conclude with some reflections.

FIRST. I am to represent the character which St. Paul claimeth for himself, and all other ministers ordinary and extraordinary. " Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Now this, in the

First place, declareth our Master, and by whom we are commissioned and employed ; namely Christ.

The word, here rendered minister *, usually signifieth a seryant. To be the ministers of Christ,

* The word is *υπηρετης*, which being derived from *υπο* and *ερετης*, properly signifieth an under-rower ; and by a synecdoche, minister, famulus, in which sense it is generally explained by Lexicographers. And though it sometimes signifieth a *public officer*, it is always one who is subject to, and attendant on, a superior officer, and appointed to

Christ, therefore, plainly denoteth, that Christ alone is our Master. Agreeably to his own declaration to his apostles, when they were contending for superiority and preheminance in his kingdom: "One is your master, even Christ, "and all ye are brethren;" ye are all on a level, are all peers or equals, all alike invested with my commission, and are fellow-servants in my church and family; and I am master and lord, to whom jurisdiction and dominion appertain.

The apostles originally received their commission from Christ: "Go," saith he, "and "disciple all nations, baptizing them in the

to execute his orders. Xenophon speaketh of the ἀμφι τα στρατιωτικά υπηρεταί, whose business it was to provide necessities for the troops under the direction of the general, and who seem to have acted likewise in the capacity of his messengers or *Aids de camp*. De Cyri Instit. lib. ii. p. 91. p. 85. p. 116, 117. In the Evangelist Matthew, chap. v. 25. where a judge is spoken of as committing a delinquent to the care of his officer, it meaneth to his *sergeant* or *lieut.* And in this sense it is used by Plutarch, when he saith, that Brutus, passing sentence on his son Titus, εως ἀποσρέψας προς τας υπηρετας το πρόσωπον, υμετερον ήδη, ειπεν, το λοιπὸν το εργον. in vit. Poplicolæ, oper. p. 99. E. edit. Francof. 1620. In St. Luke, chap. iv. 20. it is used for the servant of the synagogue. In general it answereth to the שוטרִים shoterim among the Hebrews, who were possessed of no authority themselves, being only the servants and attendants of some superior officers or magistrates, by whose commands their duty was both directed and circumscribed. The word, therefore, is with great propriety applied to the ministers of Christ, who are only his servants, and intitled to no regard, any further than they follow his instructions.

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" name

“ name of the Father, of the Son, and of the
 “ Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe what-
 “ soever I have commanded you ; and lo I am
 “ with you always, even to the end of the
 “ world †.” And when he authorized his
 seventy disciples, it was in these words : “ be-
 “ hold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst
 “ of wolves ; be ye therefore wise as serpents,
 “ and harmless as doves ‡.” And the apostles
 of Christ, after his ascension, considered them-
 selves as acting under his authority, and pur-
 suant to powers delegated to them by him.
 Thus St. Paul declareth, “ all things are of
 “ God, who hath reconciled us to himself by
 “ Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the mi-
 “ nistry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was
 “ in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,
 “ not imputing their trespasses unto them, and
 “ hath committed unto us the word of recon-
 “ ciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for
 “ Christ, as though God did beseech you by
 “ us, we pray you in Christ’s stead be ye recon-
 “ ciled unto God ; for he hath made him to be
 “ sin for us who knew no sin, that we might
 “ be made the righteousness of God in him §.”
 Christ received his commission from the Fa-
 ther, and the apostles from Christ.

And they were not merely the apostles and
 extraordinary ministers of the church, at the

† Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

‡ Matt. x, 16.

§ 2 Cor. v. 18—21.

first promulgation of the gospel, who received their instructions and commission from Christ; but the under-servants in the family, the ordinary ministers of Christ, in all succeeding ages, derive their commission from the same fountain as the apostles did; though not immediately and individually, yet by virtue of a general institution and ordinance, which he hath established, and made perpetual. So St. Paul declareth: “when he,” that is Christ, “ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men—and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some *pastors* and *teachers*, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ †.”

By virtue of this grant I do not claim for the ministers of Christ any mysterious or any indelible character. By ordination to the christian ministry, I understand nothing more than men’s publickly and solemnly devoting themselves, and being set apart, to be the servants of Christ in the dispensation of the gospel; a solemn engagement to “spend and be spent ||” for the service of Christ and souls.

† Eph. iv. 8—13.

|| 2 Cor. xii. 15.

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And

And this notion is as unexceptionable, as it is intelligible. All christians are Christ's servants, and own him as their master, and engage to be faithful to him in all their secular concerns, and in all their transactions and commerce with the world: whereas, they who assume the office of ministers, withdraw from the secular affairs of the world, that they may be wholly occupied in divine things; that they may serve all the children and servants of Christ, and help them forward in their way to heaven; not deriving any authority or power from men, but only claiming and exercising what they derived from Christ, taking his instructions for their rule, and owning him alone as their master and lord.

The apostles brought credentials directly from Christ, to prove beyond controversy the truth and validity of their divine mission; and from thence arose the obligation all were under to attend to what they delivered. "He that heareth you," saith Christ, "heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me ||." And therefore the apostles declared, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake †." And St. Paul expresseth himself thus to the Galatians: "Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not

|| Luke x. 16.

† 2 Cor. iv. 5.

“ be

“ be the servant of Christ. But I assure you,
 “ brethren, that the gospel which I preached
 “ among you, was not after men; for I
 “ neither received it of man, neither was I
 “ taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus
 “ Christ §.” And he expressly exhorteth Archippus : “ Take heed to the ministry, *which*
 “ *thou hast received of the Lord*, that thou ful-
 “ fill it *.” And he blesteth Christ Jesus his
 Lord, who had “ counted him faithful, and
 “ had put him into the ministry †.”

I own, since miraculous gifts and powers
 have ceased, we, who now stile ourselves mi-
 nisters, have no way left to prove ourselves the
 authorized ministers of Christ, except by our
 possessing ministerial qualifications, being
 blameless and exemplary in our conversation,
 “ apt to teach,” devoting ourselves to the work
 of the ministry, approving ourselves “ able mi-
 “ nisters of the New Testament,” and “ work-
 “ men that need not be ashamed, rightly di-
 “ viding the word of truth,” giving ourselves
 to “ reading, meditation, and prayer,” and
 producing ministerial gifts and graces instead of
 miraculous ones. With such talents and such
 a temper, with souls animated and enlarged
 with the love of Christ, we may venture to as-
 sume the title and character of servants of
 Christ ; we may come in his name, we may
 plead his authority, his merit, his love ; we
 § Gal. i. 10—12. * Col. iv. 17. † 1 Tim. i. 12.

may

may call up your attention, not to ourselves, but to him; we may preach him lord and head of his church, and exhort you to rely on his mediation, and obey his precepts, as ever you hope to be owned by him as his genuine disciples.

Secondly. The character of “ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God,” denoteth the thing with which we are intrusted, or the errand and embassy on which we are employed; namely the dispensation of the mysteries of God. By the mysteries of God I understand all those divine purposes with respect to the salvation of men, which were hid from former ages and generations; and, though unfolded by degrees, were never fully made known until the dispensation of the gospel. Thus the apostle Paul speaking of the subject and manner of his preaching, observeth, “We
“apostles speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God
“ordained before the world unto our glory;
“which none of the princes of this world
“knew; for had they known it, they would
“not have crucified the Lord of glory*.” And in like manner, commending the believing Romans to God, “who is of power,” added he, “to establish you according to my
“gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ,
“according to the revelation of the mystery

* 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

“ which

“ which was kept secret since the world began,
 “ but agreeable to the scriptures of the pro-
 “ phets, and pursuant to the commandment of
 “ the everlasting God, is now made known to
 “ all nations for the obedience of faith †.”

When the ministers of Christ are said to be stewards of the mysteries of God, it doth not, I apprehend, refer to their preaching doctrines which are in their own nature abstruse and inexplicable and incomprehensible; but only, as it appeareth to me, to their declaring to the world, by divine authority, those doctrines with respect to reconciliation with God and the eternal salvation of sinners, which were not, and could not be, fully understood and unfolded till after Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension; the original meaning of the word mystery being nothing more than something secret or concealed*.

The

† Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

* This is the proper meaning of *μυστήριον*; whether, with J. Casaubon, we derive it from the hebrew סֵתֶר *satar*, occultare, to hide or secrete; from whence cometh מִסְתָּר *mistar*, or מִסְתּוֹר *mistor*, *res abscondita*, *secretum*; (see his *Exercitationes ad Baronii Annal. Exerc. xvi. § xliii. p. 478. edit. Genev. 1655.*) or with Constantine (see his *Lexicon in voc.*) either from *μυσιν σημα* *os obsignare*, or from *μω* *claudio* and *τηρεω* *custodio*, because mysteries *μυστήρια τηρεω*, are things which ought to be kept secret. Accordingly those particular religious rites or doctrines, the knowledge of which, among the Heathens, was concealed from the vulgar, and only imparted, under an oath of secrecy,

The errand, therefore, or embassy, on which ministers are employed, is to publish, and explain, and enforce the christian revelation, to preach the mysteries of the kingdom, that is, the gospel, both as to the duties it injoineth, and the privileges it conferreth. And in this sense our Saviour useth the expression, when his disciples came and asked him, why he spoke to the multitude in parables.—“Because,” saith he, “it is given unto you to know the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but “to them it is not given*.” As if he had said, You have all the truths which concern the state of the gospel and the kingdom of the Messiah clearly and fully explained to you; yet the mixed multitude are not worthy, or disposed, to receive such a discovery.

This then is the province of the ministers of Christ: to “declare to his people the whole “counsel of God,” and to “keep back nothing “which is profitable to them;” as stewards of the household, dispensing, out of the stores and provisions of the great master of the family, what is suitable to the exigencies of every member of it; “giving to every one his portion in due season;” feeding them not with chaff, but with crecy, to the initiated, were, on that account, stiled mysteries. And all the derivations of the word lead us to this one uniform idea of it, as denoting a secret not yet divulged; in which sense it is used both by the sacred and profane authors.

* Matt. xiii. 11.

pure

pure wheat; and administering “milk to them
 “who are weak and only babes in Christ, and
 “meat to them who are of full age,” and of a
 vigorous and athletic constitution; “to all, as
 “they are able to bear it;” that “we may
 “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

We are not sent to instruct you in matters
 of science or points of speculation, to reconcile
 the jarring opinions of sages and philosophers,
 or to make you wise according to the wisdom
 of this world. “For it is written,” saith St.
 Paul, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
 “and will bring to nothing the understanding
 “of the prudent. Where is the wise? where
 “is the scribe? where is the disputer of this
 “world? hath not God made foolish the wis-
 “dom of this world? for after that, in the
 “wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew
 “not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of
 “preaching to save them that believe. For
 “the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek
 “after wisdom; but we preach Christ cruci-
 “fied, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and
 “to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them
 “who are called, both Jews and Greeks,
 “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom
 “of God*.” And accordingly he saith, “I,
 “brethren, when I came to you, came not
 “with excellency of speech or of wisdom, de-
 “claring unto you the testimony of God. For

I Cor. i. 19—24.

E

“I de-

“ I determined not to know any thing among
 “ you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified †.”
 Not that the apostle was always discoursing and
 insisting on one single article or branch of di-
 vine revelation, however important and inte-
 resting, or however seasonable it might be at
 that time, and to those who were yet Jews or
 Heathens, or but newly converted to the chri-
 stian faith; but while he laid Christ as the
 foundation-stone, and the only foundation, he
 endeavoured to raise a noble superstructure there-
 on, and to “ make the man of God perfect in
 “ every good work ;” not only inforcing obe-
 dience to the divine will in the general, but
 requiring the practice of those particular duties,
 and the exercise of those graces and virtues,
 which are the fruits of faith; and which are
 not only ornamental, but essential to the chri-
 stian state.

Thirdly. The title, “ ministers of Christ
 and stewards of the mysteries of God,” point-
 eth out, to whom we are accountable for
 our fidelity and diligence: namely, to him
 who employed us, and whose stewards we are.
 Agreeably hereunto, St. Paul declareth to the
 Corinthians in the words immediately following
 the text, that it was “ with him a very small
 “ thing to be judged of them, or of man’s
 “ judgment ;” knowing that to them he was not
 accountable; “ for he that judgeth me, is the

† 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

“Lord.” And elsewhere he declareth, “We
 “labour,” that is, we who preach the gospel,
 labour, “that whether present or absent, we
 “may be accepted of him; for we must all ap-
 “pear before the judgment seat of Christ, that
 “every one may receive the things done in his
 “body, according to that he hath done, whe-
 “ther it be good or bad. Knowing therefore
 “the terror of the Lord, we perswade men ||.”

A reverence and awe of him, to whom we are
 accountable; of his authority, of his omni-
 science, and of his ability to discern and reward
 our fidelity, or punish our remissness or unskil-
 fulness, and especially our breach of trust; is a
 strong and awakening motive to disinterested-
 ness, to diligence, to constancy and integrity in
 our work. St. Paul speaking of his own con-
 duct saith, that “in all things he endeavoured
 “to approve himself the minister of God in
 “much patience, in afflictions, in necessities,
 “in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in
 “tumults, in labour, in watchings, in fast-
 “ings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-
 “suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost,
 “by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by
 “the armour of righteousness, on the right
 “hand and on the left, by honour and disho-
 “nour, by evil report and good report*.”
 For “seeing we have received this ministry,”
 saith he, “we have renounced the hidden
 “things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness

|| 2 Cor. v. 9—11.

* 2 Cor. vi. 4—8.

“or handling the word of God deceitfully, but
 “by manifestation of the truth, commending
 “ourselves to every man’s conscience in the
 “sight of God †.” For we are not as many,
 “who corrupt the word of God, but as of sin-
 “cerity, as accountable to God, and as
 “acting in his sight, so speak we in Christ Je-
 “sus ‡.” This is a brave and noble declaration,
 worthy an honest man and christian minister.
 And it had been well for the christian church,
 if all, who have claimed the honourable title of
 stewards of the mysteries of God, had acted in
 like manner, had, like Moses, been “faithful
 “in all God’s house as servants,” had kept their
 eye continually fixed on that account which
 must be given by them to the great master of
 the family, when coming to reckon with his
 servants, he shall say, “Give me an account of
 “your stewardship, for ye shall be no longer
 “stewards ||.” But this bringeth me

In the SECOND place, to enquire what this
 character may be supposed to challenge and de-
 serve, when the apostle desireth, let a man so
 account of us. And I observe,

First. It plainly entitleth us to no regard
 any further than as we produce Christ’s war-
 rant and commission for what we deliver and
 enjoin.

† 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

‡ 2 Cor. ii. 17.

|| Luke xvi. 2.

A steward or servant can be intitled to no respect in his own name or right, but only in virtue of his master's authority and dignity. And therefore, if he exceedeth his commission, if he delivereth any message as from his master, which he is not intrusted or impowered to deliver, he is so far from having a right to claim respect, that he deserveth a very severe rebuke. Our Saviour himself hath made the distinction: "He that receiveth a *prophet in the name of a prophet*, shall receive a prophet's reward; "and he that receiveth a righteous man in the "name of a righteous man, shall receive a "righteous man's reward *." We are to be accounted and esteemed as the servants and stewards of Christ, no further, than as we produce Christ's commission and warrant, to authenticate our message, and to support what we deliver as divine truth. And we are abusing our character, and affronting our master, when we go forth and make use of his name, to give a sanction to any doctrines of fallible men. Christ hath left us our commission, and our message, in the Scriptures; and with these in our hands, and appealing to them for the truth and importance of all we deliver, we may justly speak with authority, as in the name of Christ. The apostles themselves did not make use of the sanctity of their character, though they were inspired, to forestal and preclude the judgment of private christians. St. Paul commend-

* Matt. x. 41.

ed the Bereans for searching the Scriptures of the Old Testament, to see whether what he said was agreeable thereto *. And again, “ I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say †.” And again, “ Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things ‡.”

From their example should the ministers of Christ have learnt, not to “ lord it over the “ faith” of christians, but in meekness to instruct the ignorant and convince gainsayers; not to menace, but to reason; not to challenge any regard to their opinions or decisions, any otherwise than as they appear consonant to the faith once delivered to the saints.

But then it may be asked, supposing the rule or construction to be in any case ambiguous, must there be no authoritative interpreter or judge, to settle its meaning? do not the ministers of Christ understand, and are they not impowered to expound the Scriptures? I answer, the ordinary ministers of Christ are no more infallible than private christians. They are often weak and ignorant men, are men of like passions and prejudices with others; so that all they say must be proved from clear passages of Scripture. And what can be evinced by reason and argument, and a fair interpretation of Scripture, needeth not their authority to in-

* Acts xvii. 11.

† 1 Cor. x. 15.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 7.
force

force it ; because it hath a sufficient one without theirs : namely, that of Christ their master. And what they cannot make out by Scripture and reason, he must be very weak who will receive upon their authority. Ministers must, first, make the sense and meaning of their rule and instructions plain to the understanding of the people ; and, when they have done this, they may demand regard to it in the name, and by the authority of their master. And this leadeth me to observe

Secondly. That as far as we produce our Saviour's warrant and commission for what we deliver, I think it intitleth us to a candid, and patient, and attentive hearing.

The doctrine of the gospel is unquestionably of the highest importance to mankind. If there be any subjects in the world, that ought to awaken and engage their attention, they must be those which relate to their everlasting salvation. And though I am ready to acknowledge, that the imperfections attending the servant, who delivereth the message, may sometimes prevent its coming with that weight and energy on our minds, it might otherwise do ; yet sure I am, there is no message from Christ but well deserveth our attention ; and we should make it matter of duty to attend with seriousness and candor, “ to hear what the Lord our God hath “ to say unto us.” Christ expressly assured his apostles,

apostles, in a passage already cited, “He that
 “heareth you, heareth me, and he that de-
 “spiseth you, despiseth me, and he that de-
 “spiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.”
 When the prophet Jeremiah was sent with a
 message to the children of Israel, he expostula-
 teth with God for calling him out to this ser-
 vice: “Ah! Lord God,” saith he, “behold I
 “cannot speak, I am a child. But the Lord
 “answered, Say not, I am a child; for thou
 “shalt go to all to whom I send thee, and what-
 “soever I command thee, that shalt thou speak.
 “Be not afraid of their faces;—for, behold! I
 “have put words into thy mouth *.” And as
 far as we produce Christ’s warrant for what we
 deliver, he may be said to have *put words into*
our mouths; and then we speak “not the
 “words of men, but what is in deed and truth
 “the word of the living God.” We may there-
 fore justly apply on this occasion the words of
 the apostle to the Hebrews, “See that ye refuse
 “not him that speaketh; for if they escaped
 “not, who refused him that spake on earth,”
 that is Moses, “much more shall not we
 “escape, if we turn away from him that speak-
 “eth from heaven †.” Jesus Christ, “whose
 “we are, and whom we serve ‡,” is “declared
 “to be the Son of God with power by his re-
 “surrection from the dead ||;” and when he
 sendeth his servants in his name, and in his

* Jerem. i. 6—9.

† Acts xxvii. 23.

‡ Heb. xii. 25.

|| Rom. i. 4.

Father's name, they cannot be despised with impunity. There is a passage of St. Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians, concerning himself, very applicable to my present purpose: "Do ye look," saith he, "on things according to the outward appearance? For should I boast of my authority which the Lord hath given me for your edification, I should have no cause to be ashamed; inasmuch as though my bodily presence is weak, and my speech or elocution contemptible, yet my letters" (or what I compose and deliver) "are weighty and powerful." But if I may do it with decency and without offence, allow me to add,

Thirdly, That this character, the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, intitleth us to esteem and affection, as far as we appear to have our Master's cause and interest at heart.

I say, as far as we have our Master's cause and interest at heart. An ignorant, indolent, selfish, carnal, proud, imperious minister, who aspireth after wealth or power, is one of the most odious of all characters. But a truly humble, conscientious, faithful, diligent one, who is able to say with St. Paul, "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ *,"—God pardon us, that so few of us can say this!—I say, such a minister surely is worthy of double honour.

* Philip. i. 8.

It is undoubtedly just and natural to pay some regard to the faithful servants of those whom we love and honour. And if we have any affection for the greatest and best of causes, we cannot but be willing to strengthen the hands and hearts of such as are sincerely concerned in promoting it. Placing the respect due to the ministerial character on this basis, I apprehend, is unexceptionable; is very different, certainly, from making a worthy office, or an imaginary sacred character, a screen for faults or follies, which would otherwise be quite unpardonable. "We beseech you, brethren," saith St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their *work's sake* *."

In the *fourth* and last place, this character intitleth us to a ready compliance with our message; not in regard of our authority, but that of our master.

This indeed is the most material of all. And any faithful servant of Christ, who could see his master honoured and obeyed, I perswade myself, were that likely to happen, would little value being despised himself.

Jurisdiction over conscience, it is certain, we have none; our commission is from Christ our master, whose servants we are, and our only just claim to regard must arise from our being

* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

charged with a message from him. And as far as it appeareth, that we have indeed such a message from him, and that our exhortations, or advices, or remonstrances, or reproofs are agreeable to his doctrine and will, and conducive to his honour, we may reasonably hope not to be intirely disregarded. And though the ministers of Christ may be intitled to some personal respect on account of their office, yet a good minister will not be satisfied with ever such uncommon marks of affection shewn to himself, where the only valuable testimony of respect, a conformity to his master's will, is withheld and wanting. The apostle Paul blesteth God on account of the believing Romans, "That though they were the servants of sin, they had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, which was delivered to them; and, being made free from sin, were become the servants of righteousness*." And he addresseth the Thessalonians in this manner, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe†." A command or prohibition of our Divine Master, though reported or transmitted by the meanest of his servants, carrieth in it an indispensable call to obedience, and cannot be disputed without a virtual contempt of his authority, in whose name

* Rom. xi. 17, 18.

† 1 Theff. ii. 13.

it is delivered. And Christ's authority, with all christians, ought to be sacred, as an observation of his ordinances and injunctions is of the utmost importance to our salvation. To slight and disregard therefore any message from him, is neither consistent with a due regard to our own happiness, nor with our engagements as christians. "No word of the Lord will return back unto him empty, but shall accomplish the thing whereunto he sendeth it *;" and "will be a favour of life unto life, or of death unto death †," according as men embrace or reject it.

I shall now conclude the subject with the following reflections:

First. It behoveth ministers to endeavour to do nothing to forfeit or lessen their character.

On the contrary, I am very sensible it is our duty to discover our humility, and moderation, and deadness to the world, our piety and lively devotion, our affability and condescension, our love to all mankind, our zeal for practical religion, our candor in debates and points which are disputed among christians, our desire and love of peace, our thirst of knowledge and of the most excellent spiritual gifts, our contentment, cheerfulness, and calm submission to the allotments of divine providence, our delight in doing good, and our intense and ardent desire

* Isai. lv. 11.

† 2 Cor. ii. 16.

of promoting the honour of God, and the salvation of immortal souls. Unless we are examples of these things, we are in great danger of being despised, and of being thought to exercise the christian ministry more out of regard to the worldly emoluments which attend it, than from a sincere desire to serve and promote the interest and kingdom of Christ. Nevertheless,

Secondly. The failings of ministers are not to be imputed to Christ.

It is a very common error to estimate the merits of a cause, by the conduct of those persons who put themselves at the head of it. But this is far from being always an accurate and certain criterion of judgment. The best interest in the world may have corrupt and interested patrons and advocates ; as the best master may have bad servants. In such cases therefore, we should not conclude too hastily and peremptorily, but be careful to lay the blame only where it is due. The faults and follies, or grosser crimes of ministers, must be answered for by themselves, and are unjustly charged either on ministers in general, or in particular on Christ himself ; because they are his abhorrence and detestation, and will be severely animadverted on and punished by him in the great day. “ Blessed,” saith our Saviour, “ is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, he

“ he shall make him ruler over all his goods,
 “ But as to that evil servant, who shall say in
 “ his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming,
 “ and shall smite,” that is, behave ill to his
 fellow-servants, “ and shall eat and drink and
 “ be drunken, the Lord of that servant shall
 “ come in a day when he looketh not for him,
 “ and in an hour that he is not aware of, and
 “ shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his
 “ portion with the hypocrites: there shall be
 “ weeping and gnashing of teeth *.”

Thirdly. If ministers are diligent and faithful, they may hope to have human infirmities borne with, and reasonable allowances made for their imperfections.

Being men of like passions with others, it would be unreasonable to expect they should be intirely free from the errors of this frail and mortal state; and they who discern their fidelity to their Master, and see them to be upright and diligent, should be cautious of magnifying or exposing their infirmities; knowing, that “ we have the treasure” of the gospel “ in
 “ earthen vessels, that the excellency of the
 “ power may appear to be of God, and not of
 “ men †.” The apostles of Christ, with all their uncommon endowments, had not attained perfection. And therefore St. Paul “ with-
 “ stood St. Peter to the face, because he was to
 “ be blamed ||” for temporizing with the

* Matt. xxiv. 46—51. † 2 Cor. iv. 7. || Gal. ii. 11.

Jews; and chargeth Barnabas with being infected and “carried away with the like diffimulation ||.” And when he exhorteth those to whom he wrote, to “be followers of him,” it was only so far as “he was of Christ ‡.”

Finally. It behoveth both ministers and people to be frequently making up their accounts, and to maintain a continual correspondence with their Lord and Master.

It will doubtless, my dear brother, be your care in the whole of your ministry, to keep in view the approbation, of that God and Saviour, to whom you are accountable. But I forbear, lest I should invade the province of that worthy friend and brother, who is appointed to give you a word of exhortation; which he will do on several accounts, to more advantage than I am able.

As for you, my christian brethren, who are members of this society, it cannot be doubted, but you are sincerely disposed, and resolved, to contribute all in your power, not only to the decent and honourable support and maintenance of your minister, but likewise, in every view, to his satisfaction and happiness. And I believe, you will be able to promote the latter no way more effectually, than by your great improvement under his ministrations, in all the graces and virtues of the christian life. To

|| Gal. ii. 13.

‡ 1 Cor. xi. 1.

this end, let me remind you of the necessity of frequently reflecting, what proportion your improvements bear to your advantages and opportunities. We are all of us, God knoweth, too remiss in this respect; we content ourselves with a superficial performance of our religious duties, or a formal attendance on divine ordinances, without sufficiently reflecting, whether they have the proper effect on our souls; whether we grow more serious and humble and heavenly-minded, more desirous of being useful to others, and to the cause of true religion in the world. In vain do we meet together sabbath after sabbath in the house of God, and attend on the christian ministry, if we are still as worldly-minded and sensual as ever. Let the swift progress and speedy declension of our day of grace, and season of probation and trial, occasion us to place that solemn day in near view, when every one of us, both ministers and people, must give up an account of himself to God. The joy of that meeting dependeth, in a great measure, on the use we make of our present religious solemnities. Happy shall we indeed be, if we are able to expect the great master of assemblies, in the character of the supreme judge, without any terror or dismay; if neither minister nor people have any cause to accuse or bear witness against each other, but are a mutual joy and crown of rejoicing, in the great day of their Lord's appearing.

T H E E N D,

QUESTIONS
PROPOSED TO
Mr. SAMUEL WILTON,
BY
FRANCIS SPILSBURY,
WITH THE
CONFESSION of FAITH,
AND
ANSWERS returned.

QUESTIONS

AND ANSWERS

FRANCIS SPILLSBURY

CONFESSION

AND

A. S. W. H. S. returned.

G

My dear Brother,

AS we are now come together in the house of God by your desire, and that of this church, to assist you in the solemn dedication of yourself to God, in the sacred and important character of a christian minister; we cheerfully embrace this opportunity which providence hath put into our hands, of contributing all we can, to the solemnity of this service.

And tho' we pretend not to be lords over your faith, yet as you are chosen to stand at the head of this christian society, to lead on and assist their devotions, and to instruct them (as God shall enable you) in the true knowledge, right understanding, and proper improvement of "the Holy Scriptures, which" are able to make them wise unto salvation, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus:" it may be some satisfaction both to them and to us, if on this occasion you will please to give us an open and genuine confession of your christian faith.

CONFESSIO N,

S I R,

AS I am neither afraid publickly to own that Master whom I serve in the gospel, nor ashamed of his religion which I profess, I shall represent to you in as concise a manner as I can, what at present appear to me to be the

general principles, and leading doctrines of the christian religion.—Were I called upon to subscribe to creeds framed and imposed by other men, I hope I should be one of the last to comply with a request, so unfavorable to the natural and religious rights and liberties of mankind, and as it seems to me, so gross and bold an invasion upon the supreme and sole authority of Christ in his church.—But while I am only requested to express my own sentiments, in those words which my own ideas suggest, and allowed to make the Scriptures my only guide, free from a slavish subjection to commonly received opinions and established systems, I shall very readily and chearfully give you the satisfaction you require.—Only let me bespeak the favorable indulgence and candor of my auditors to the freedom I myself may use, and which I will ever allow to all my fellow-christians, not taking offence at their minute and circumstantial differences, desirous of holding the unity of the faith, in the bond of love.

When I survey the frame of nature, and reflect on the many striking evidences of design and intelligence in the constitution of the visible world, I am necessarily convinced of the existence of one first cause of all things, possessed of infinite power, of consummate wisdom, and boundless goodness.—But tho' the system of nature affordeth to the mind unenlightened by revelation, many noble attestations to the existence and perfections of the Deity, yet I believe it has pleased God more clearly to reveal

his

his nature, character, and designs in the writings of the Old and New Testaments. And these I receive as the genuine oracles of God, “ which came not by the will of man, “ but were given by the inspiration of God* ;” and from the discoveries therein contained, I learn that there is but one living and true God, supreme in the perfection of his nature, and in his dominion and power.—That he is a self-existent, necessary, independent, eternal, and unchangeable Being, whose knowledge as the omnipresent Spirit extends to all beings, in whose sight all things are naked and open, and from whom the thoughts of the heart cannot be concealed ; who is unspotted in the rectitude of his nature, and to whose infinite benevolence and goodness, all other beings owe their existence.—But tho’ I believe the unity of the Deity to be a fundamental principle of the christian religion, I mean not to deny to either of the sacred Three into whose names we are baptized, and to whom the titles and perfections of Deity are ascribed, that honor which is due ; but I receive the testimony of the sacred Scriptures on this sublime and inscrutable article of our religion, believing it upon their authority to be perfectly consistent with the unity of the Godhead.

I believe that “ he who built all things is God,” who is the Creator of “ all things visible and “ invisible.”—All things were created by him, and for him—that at his almighty word, obe-

* 2 Pet. i. 21. 2 Tim. iii. 16.

dient nature arose into existence, and the whole creation is maintained in being by his constant unremitted presence, energy, and providence.

I believe that he distinguish'd the human race, from all other Beings which he formed to inhabit this globe, by creating man in the glorious similitude and likeness of himself—That he endowed him with noble intellectual and moral powers, and thereby made him capable of the contemplation, service, and enjoyment of himself.—Yet man continued not long in this state of innocence and perfection; but by a wilful breach of that positive command, which was given as a test of his obedience, he forfeited the dignity, felicity, and immortality of his original state, and introduced evil and death into the world; for “by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned *.”—In consequence of this transgression, our first parents were degraded from their original dignity, banished from their delightful abode in Paradise, and the seeds of corruption springing up, and disseminating their baleful influence in a numerous train of diseases, they first fell the victims of death; and all their posterity have been subjected to the same effects, from that connection which God had established between Adam and his descendants; and they are all in a state of moral depravity and corruption.

* Rom. v. 12,

In the disconsolate situation in which our fallen first parents were, after they had been prevailed upon by the temptation of Satan to sin against God, it pleased the gracious Governor of the world, to administer relief to them by the distant prospect of a deliverer, who should accomplish the benevolent and merciful scheme of salvation, which he who foresaw the short duration of the first created pair, in their primitive state of innocence and happiness, had of his own free and sovereign good-will planned for our recovery.—And as the effects of the first apostasy grew more and more prevalent by length of time, the promise opened more clearly upon the world, dawning in all the different antecedent dispensations, 'till it obtained its full and glorious accomplishment by the incarnation and advent of Jesus Christ, “ the second
“ Adam, who took not on him the nature of
“ angels, but the seed of Abraham, and be-
“ came partaker of flesh and blood,” that he might deliver those who were “ chosen of God
“ in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the
“ world,” from eternal death and condemnation.

I believe in the testimonies which God gave to this his only begotten Son when he brought him into the world ; and that after he had passed through the stages of infancy and childhood, he took on him the character of a public teacher, and made pretensions to be, what he proved himself to be, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.—That he confirmed
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the truth and divinity of his mission and character by innumerable miracles, by the peculiarly glorious and salutary discoveries of his gospel, and by the unsullied purity of his life and doctrine.—That he was treated with the greatest indignity and contempt when living, and spending his whole life in the most benevolent and incessant labours for the good of mankind; and at last, after having been unjustly accused and condemned, was in consequence of the rage and malice of a corrupted race of bigotted, superstitious, and haughty ecclesiastics of the Jewish nation, crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; where he fulfilled (without the knowledge or design of the wicked and cruel authors and instruments of his crucifixion) “the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God *;” and thus by a most amazing instance of divine benevolence and love, by his own blood, made expiation for our sins.—For I do not, I cannot, Sir, from the sacred history of the event itself, and the many references to it in Scripture upon all occasions, and the great stress laid upon it in the article of our acceptance with God, consider the death of Christ *merely* as that of a martyr, in giving an additional attestation to the truth of his doctrine; but I do most firmly, and with the most joyful satisfaction and pleasing hope thence derived, believe that when he thus sealed his doctrine by his blood, and gave a perfect example of resignation and submission to the will of God, he also “gave his life as a ransom for many”—that “the

* Acts ii. 23.

“ Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all”—that he made atonement for sin, and died in the room and stead of sinners, to do honour to the divine perfections and government, and render our pardon and forgiveness consistent with the justice and holiness of the righteous and supreme legislator.—This doctrine, Sir, I believe to be one of the most glorious and animating discoveries of the Gospel to sinful creatures, which has the most powerful influence to give ease and peace to a wounded conscience, what I receive as the only foundation of my hope before God, and what I believe to be the only meritorious cause of our pardon and justification; which are obtained through faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, in what he did and suffered on the behalf of mankind.

But tho’ Jesus our deliverer was thus for a while, and to subserve these gracious ends, in subjection to death, he could not be holden by the bands of it; he therefore rose triumphant on the third day and shewed himself alive after his passion, associating and conversing with his disciples.—I believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ to be supported by strong and incontestible evidence, to be a most important fact, which lies at the basis of all our hopes from the Redeemer, gives efficacy to his death for the pardon of sin, and is a clear and valid proof, of the Father’s acceptance of his sacrifice, for our redemption and salvation.

I believe that when Jesus had fulfilled the work which his Father gave him to accomplish

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upon earth, he ascended up into heaven in the presence of many credible witnesses, and is now exalted at the right hand of the Father, sustaining the encouraging and endearing character of our advocate and intercessor, and exercising an universal government, over that kingdom which he has founded in, and purchased by his blood.

I believe that, according to his promise, he sent down at the day of Pentecost, a large and miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost on his disciples, in order to qualify them for propagating his religion among men of every kindred, and tongue, and people.—And though those extraordinary gifts and powers have ceased in these latter ages, I believe from the holy Scriptures, and from the state and temper of fallen men, that the ordinary influences of the divine Spirit are absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the kingdom and church of Christ upon earth ; and that the method of our admittance into it, is by a faith founded upon evidence, and producing a correspondent reliance upon Jesus Christ for salvation ; and by an unfeigned repentance of all our sins, issuing in a course of sincere and universal obedience.—These are the necessary and progressive steps to, and the only solid evidence of our regeneration and conversion, of which the renewing and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, appear to me to be plainly represented as the powerful efficient, in a manner consentaneous to, and in concurrence with the free and rational operations of our own minds.—And I think

think the doctrine of divine assistances, to be one of those noble and animating encouragements to the practice of virtue, by which the system of morality laid down in the New Testament, is rendered infinitely superior to all the precepts of former sages; and by them I believe, those who are born again will be led on from one grace and virtue to another, 'till they shall arrive at the heavenly perfection--that by the exercise of their graces and virtues, their religious principles will be formed into settled habits of true goodness, and they shall finally attain by a course of perseverance in well-doing, the rewards of everlasting life.

I believe that the true catholic church of Christ consists of as many as truly believe in, and sincerely obey the Gospel, of whatever communion or persuasion; and I believe nothing more is necessary to the regular constitution of a christian church, than that it consist of a number of persons associated for the purposes of religious worship, attending on the sacraments of Christ's institution, walking in an obedient practical regard to the commands, and in the order of the gospel, and in love and charity one with another, and towards all men, under the care and inspection of their pastor; one duly qualified, and authorized to the general discharge of the duties of the ministerial character and pastoral relation, by his own dedication of himself to God in it, and to the exercise of it in any particular church, by the choice and election of its members.

Besides this, as the institution of the temporal office of a deacon was at first highly expedient, so is the continuance of it highly useful in the church of Christ.—Nor can I learn from the Scriptures, that any other standing officers are appointed.—And such a church I believe to be subject to no foreign authority or jurisdiction, either composed of assembled bodies of men or churches, or lodged in the breast of any supposed infallible individual.—For I acknowledge but one authority, namely, that of Christ the supreme law-giver and king in his church.

I believe the sacraments of the New Testament were designed to be kept up after the first ages of christianity, and still remain obligatory upon us.—These are only two—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the former, by washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, a solemn surrender is made to the Sacred Three; and it is intended to signify our defilement, and typify our renovation.—This ordinance was originally administered not only to the adult converts to christianity, but likewise to their households; and I believe is to be administered in general to believers and their children.—In the Lord's Supper we commemorate the death of Christ, and have our faith assisted by the significant emblems he has appointed, to quicken our grateful remembrance of what he endured for us, and to engage us by the constraining influence of his love, to a constant and persevering obedience to him—And in this
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social act, we express our common fellowship with all our brethren in Christ Jesus.

Finally, I believe in the immortality of the soul, and a state of future retribution.—And that there is an awful day approaching, when we shall all be summoned to the dread tribunal of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—that
 “ all that are in the graves, shall hear the voice
 “ of the Son of man, and shall come forth;
 “ they that have done good, to the resurrection
 “ of life; and they that have done evil, to the
 “ resurrection of damnation *.”—That there will be a strict and impartial scrutiny into all our actions—and that when the solemn proceedings of the general judgment shall be closed, the decisive sentence of Jesus the constituted judge, shall irreversibly fix the righteous and the wicked in the separate states suited to, and assigned for their different characters—that the wicked “ shall go away into eternal punishment,
 “ but the righteous into life eternal †.”

This, Sir, is my general view of the scheme of the christian religion through its several periods, from it's first rise in the designs of heaven, to it's final consummation.—As I am very sensible of my own imperfections and liability to error, and of the powerful influence of prejudice, prepossession, and education, I make no pretensions to having attained the most accurate and judicious certainty in matters of doubtful disputation; nor do I think it can reasonably be expected from me at this time of

* John v. 28, 29.

† Matt. xxv. 46.

life.—It is my steady purpose (the grace of God assisting me) still to make the Scriptures my constant study, diligently to investigate the footsteps of sacred truth, and to preserve my mind ever open to conviction, and the power of reasonable persuasion.—It is the farthest from my wishes or intention, Sir, that any should interpret this my declaration, as too often such have been interpreted, to signify a fixed standard from which I resolve never in the least to deviate.—No; I hope and pray, that whenever I am convinced by reason, and the force of evidence, of having erred in matters of importance, I shall have both honesty and ingenuity enough to own and retract my errors.—And I would beg leave to observe, that though in such a general view of religion, some truths of a more controversial, and others of a more practical nature are promiscuously introduced as the subjects of belief; yet in the course of my public ministrations, I propose not equally to insist upon them all, but more or less in proportion to their apparent respective importance, and influence upon the christian temper and conduct, being well persuaded that to mend the heart, and regulate the life, are the great ends of the christian ministry, to which a controversial strain of preaching, I apprehend, very little administers.—And I request the joint-intercessions of my reverend fathers and brethren, and of all my fellow-christians this day assembled, as the witnesses of the solemn vows which I am taking upon me, that I may receive

ceive continual aid and assistance from the spirit of divine illumination, to enable me rightly to understand the word of God, and to build up this his people in the faith, the holiness, and the consolations of the Gospel—that we may be mutually happy in our relation here, and may hereafter reap the most beneficial consequences—that “when the chief shepherd shall appear, I may receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away,” and they may be unto me, for an everlasting crown of joy and rejoicing.



Dear Sir,

YOU have now professed a good profession before many witnesses—Nevertheless, as we are commanded to lay hands suddenly on no man, it may be very proper, further to call upon you, for your explicit answers to the following questions.

Although from our personal knowledge of you, and your education for the ministry, we see no reason to doubt either your natural or acquired abilities, and qualifications for that sacred office you are now entering upon; yet it may reasonably be expected upon this occasion that you will honestly and freely inform us,

QUESTION I.

What are your ends in undertaking the work and office of a christian minister?

ANSWER.

To be engaged in the christian ministry was, Sir, the early object of my choice, in subordination to which the method of my education was directed; and the nearer my engagement in it was in prospect, the more my inclination to it increased.—I entered upon this sacred office, Sir, with painful diffidence, with deliberate reflection, with an humble but cheerful reliance upon, and importunate supplications to the father of lights for his presence and aid, and his acceptance of my dedication of
myself

myself to him in it.—And as far as I know my own heart, it then was, and still is the leading principle by which I was, and am animated to undertake, and prosecute this office, that I might therein be the instrument of glorifying God in the recovery and salvation of sinners, and of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom and church in the world.—This, Sir, I esteem the noblest satisfaction we can enjoy on this side the grave, the most exquisite gratification of a benevolent heart.—And I can sincerely and truly say, there is nothing lies so near my heart, nothing that is a rival object of the ambition of my mind in this sacred character, to the desire of succeeding in the embassy of the Gospel, of saving the souls of my fellow-immortals in a state of corruption, and subject to the displeasure of God and future condemnation, from all their miseries; by prevailing on them through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to accept that Saviour who alone is all-sufficient to answer the necessities of their condition.—And if my master so honor me, I care not what sacrifices of *worldly* profit and honor I make to attain this end; for these objects I never had in view.—It is in hopes of promoting this design, or at least of approving myself faithful in attempting it, that I now, Sir, declare my preference of the ministerial character, to any profession in the world; and cheerfully engage to fulfill as far as in me lies, the duties and obligations of the pastoral relation.

QUESTION II.

As the office of a minister of the Gospel of Christ, is not to be hastily taken up, so neither are the great and important duties of it, to be slightly and superficially performed; for which reason let me ask you, What are your purposes as to diligence and industry in this calling?

ANSWER.

The least reflection, Sir, upon the nature and objects of the ministerial character, is sufficient to convince me that if faithfully discharged, it is the farthest possible from a lazy, inactive, and slothful profession; and he who takes it upon him on principles of indolence and self-indulgence, must I think, if he reflect at all, be struck with confusion at the prospect of that solemn period, when he must give up an account of his stewardship; and be destitute of all benevolence to his fellow-creatures, if he can contentedly gratify his own indolence, at the everlasting hazard of immortal souls.—I hope I shall never dare thus to trifle with so important a charge.—It has been a matter of deep concern to me, and still in some measure is, lest after all my endeavours, I should be found to occupy the place of any who might prove a more faithful, and successful labourer in the vineyard—But it is my firmest resolution, in dependence on a better strength

strength than my own, to be diligent in the duties of my station, to furnish my mind with every useful branch of learning, to devote myself to reading, meditation, and prayer, to be instant in season and out of season, in public and private.—To such diligence and industry the worth and danger of the souls of men, and the important dependence of things future and eternal, upon the improvement of each fleeting moment, are calls to which a thinking man cannot be inattentive,—and I am peculiarly bound to the greatest assiduity in fulfilling the ministry, which I trust I have received of the Lord Jesus, by the strongest ties of gratitude to this christian society; who by their choice of me for their pastor, by their unanimous importunity in soliciting my settlement among them, and by the many signal and unexpected proofs they have given of their affectionate esteem and respect for me, have a claim upon me, to make them the best returns in my power; and from their dispositions and sentiments, I know the returns which they will best approve, are diligence and industry in my calling.

Q U E S T I O N III.

As the best things are liable to be abused, and we know that the pure and undefiled religion of Jesus, hath itself been most lamentably and grossly corrupted in the apostate church of Rome, to which unhappy communion these

kingdoms formerly belonged, but from which they were in an almost miraculous manner delivered; and as you, Sir, are now dedicating yourself to the service of Christ in the reformed Protestant church, be pleased to declare, What is your opinion of the reformation from Popery?

ANSWER.

Popery I look upon, Sir, to be a most enormous and detestable system of doctrines and institutions, a disgrace to human reason, and most repugnant to the principles and precepts of divine revelation.—I survey with pleasure the records of the glorious æra of the reformation—I trace with grateful admiration the steps and influence of divine providence, which enabled the distinguished few, with such christian fortitude, and strenuous resolution, against such powerful opposition from ignorance, policy, and priestcraft, to stem the torrent of Popish superstition and impiety.—The principles upon which they founded this glorious attempt, I believe to be essential branches of that liberty, wherewith Christ hath made his followers free—principles which I shall ever maintain; making the sacred Scriptures, free from all the disguises, additions, corruptions, and traditions of the church of Rome, the rule and subject of my ministerial labours; and I pray God that in his own time and way, he would extend the blessings of the reformation, to the whole christian world.

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QUESTION IV.

As you must be sensible, that by chusing to exercise your ministry among Protestant dissenters, you entirely give up the prospect of riches, and worldly honor and power which ever lye on the side of the national establishment.—Tell us therefore, What considerations have determined your choice, to exercise your ministry among Protestant dissenters from the established church?

ANSWER.

I am a dissenter, Sir, upon the same principles that I am a protestant—The right of private judgment, of liberty of conscience, and the perfection of Scripture, are the grand principles on which I found *my* separation from the church of England; and they are the same, by which she justifies *her* separation from the church of Rome.—The terms of ministerial conformity, are such as I cannot in conscience comply with, since by acknowledging the power and authority of the church to decree rites and ceremonies, and to decide in controversies of faith, I should contradict and counteract the firm persuasion I have, that Christ himself is the only king and law-giver in his church, to whom *only* we owe obedience and subjection in things purely religious and spiritual—should deny the sufficiency and perfection of those institutions, which *alone* our

Lord and Master saw proper to appoint, and by admitting the power of the church to impose and enforce it's institutions and decisions, I should assent to an invasion upon what to me appear, to be the sacred and unalienable rights of conscience.—These are difficulties, which in my present sentiments and views I cannot overcome, without using Salvos and Evasions inconsistent with integrity, unbecoming the solemn form of subscription, and such as defeat the original end and design of the requirement.—And therefore I embark among the Protestant dissenters, as on principle, the friends of religious liberty; and chearfully give up all the prospects of worldly emolument, which engaging in the ministry under an establishment might possibly afford.

These are my views; others may have different apprehensions; and therefore I profess, and will endeavour to maintain a christian friendship towards all, who, while without violating the dictates of their consciences, they can subscribe the established articles, faithfully and assiduously fulfill the duties of the ministerial character.—These I acknowledge as Brethren, and highly esteem as fellow-labourers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and wherever providence shall cast my lot, I hope it will ever be my study, to promote the most perfect union and friendship among all christians, to live in peace and in love as our religion most strictly enjoins, and to be above all things cautious of giving any just and reasonable ground

ground of offence, as far as is consistent with the faithful discharge of my duty.

QUESTION V.

As ministers are but men, and equally liable with others to human infirmities and failings, if in any part of your conduct, you should be so unhappy as to give just occasion for admonition and reproof, Will you, Sir, in that case with christian humility and meekness, submit to friendly admonition and brotherly reproof?

ANSWER.

Ministers I believe, Sir, are subject in common with all their fellow-creatures, to the errors and imperfections of human nature.—But as mankind are in general prone to form superior expectations, from those who sustain the character of public teachers, I am persuaded there is need of the most vigilant circumspection in my walk and behaviour; especially surrounded as we are with so many enemies in the world, who are never sparing of their censures, nor lavish of their allowances, but fond of putting the most malicious interpretation on every failure—And as it is more than probable, I may justly lay myself open to censure and rebuke, I shall therefore take it as one of the strongest proofs of affection, and of a sincere and valuable friendship, if any of my fathers and brethren in the ministry, or any other of my fellow-christians, will with a tender and affectionate

onate freedom admonish me of my danger of falling, direct me how to avoid it, or with the temper of the Gospel reprove me for any erroneous and evil conduct; for he who hath my interest and reputation at heart, in whatever way he studies to secure and establish them, I shall always esteem my friend.

QUESTION VI.

Lastly, as the Lord and head of the church himself has told us, that his kingdom is not of this world—As therefore in the faithful discharge of your office as a minister of Christ, you must lift up a banner against all unrighteousness, and ungodliness of men; you may reckon upon discouragement, and opposition from men of a worldly and sensual disposition. In case troubles, discouragements, and persecutions should arise, will you hold on to the end notwithstanding?

ANSWER.

I did not, Sir, undertake the office of a minister, as a temporary occupation in life, or with a view of introducing myself *thereby*, into any other hereafter—I detest so *mean* an abuse, of so *honourable* a character—At present, it is my intention, so long as God shall continue me capacity and opportunity for the discharge of the duties incumbent on me in that station, to continue in it—I think it is not possible to estimate what might be the temper of my mind,

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or how firm my resolution would stand under open and cruel persecutions for the cause of religion—Promises of courage and heroism made without the approach of danger, and the alarm of the enemy, are seldom much to be accounted of; and are more like the noisy clamours of the rankest cowardice, than the genuine declarations of approved valour.—But I hope, in reliance upon that gracious Master, who has promised to be with his faithful servants unto the end of the world, that I shall ever find the supplies and succours of his grace, equal to the trials of faith with which he may please to exercise me; and that in case such times of persecution should arise, I should be able to adopt the heroic declaration of St. Paul in similar views.—“ Neither count I my life dear unto
 “ myself, so that I might finish my course
 “ with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.”—And if called to it, with an unshaken faith and triumphant hope, seal the profession of his religion with my blood: as I would both wish and pray, never to desert so good a Master, in so good a cause.

And to the end, that that God who searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men, may strengthen and assist me to fulfill the vows I have now solemnly and sincerely made in the presence of him, of the holy angels, and before the face of this numerous assembly, I repeat my request for the prayers

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and supplications of you all—especially of *you*, the people of my charge, to whom I have this day devoted myself in the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that I may be “a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”—instructing you in the principles, and exemplifying in my own life and conversation, the precepts of the Gospel—that I may give up an account of my fidelity and success with unutterable transports of joy in the day of final retribution, when the top stone of that sacred edifice, the christian church, shall be laid with shouting “grace grace unto it;” and so being found free “from the blood of all men,” may “both save myself, and them that hear me.”

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CHARGE.

Dear SIR,

THE relation in which you have stood to me, both in the academy and the church, would not permit me to refuse complying with your request, to take that part of the solemn services of this day, which is usually called *Giving the Charge*; though it is a service to which I have not been accustomed, and upon which I enter with diffidence. I hope, therefore, Sir, that you, and this audience will make very candid allowance for every imperfection which may attend the performance. I pretend, Sir, to no authority to dictate, or prescribe to you: that was not my practice when you was a pupil, and would be more unbecoming now you are entered into the number of christian pastors, who are all brethren, and as such on a level with each other; for our common Lord has no where, that I can find, given any one a pre-eminence above the rest. I presume, Sir, to do no more than offer you a little advice, gathered from Scripture and my

own experience and reflection, which it appears to me will be conducive to the useful exercise of your office; but it's propriety and weight I submit to your own judgment at present, and to your future experience. Nor would I be understood to design, thus publickly to hold up my own example for you to copy, while I describe the qualifications and duties of a minister of *Christ*. I mean, Sir, only to suggest to you, what I am really persuaded would, as far as practised, prove, by the divine blessing, a means of rendering all of us, who are employed in the sacred ministry, more useful and comfortable, in the discharge of the important duties of our office: and therefore what I address to you, I would equally charge upon my own heart—The lectures you have had in the academy on preaching and the pastoral care, make it less necessary for me to enter into a great number of particulars at present. I shall, therefore, Sir, do little more than take the advantage of the solemn appearance of this assembly, and the solemn business of this day, in which you have publickly devoted yourself to the christian ministry, and the service of souls, to call up to your remembrance, and impress more deeply upon your mind and heart, a few hints of the most important qualifications for the ministry, which I make no doubt you have already often considered, and will frequently revolve and meditate upon for the future. I chuse to ground what I have to say on the exhortation St. *Paul* gives to *Timothy* in the first Epistle,

Epistle, ch. iv. 16. former clause, "TAKE
 "HEED TO THYSELF." The whole passage runs,
 "Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine;
 "continue in them: for in doing this, thou
 "shalt both save thyself, and them that hear
 "thee." As several particular directions pre-
 cede in verses 11th, and following, I look
 upon the verse just read to be a sort of recapit-
 ulation of the rest, and the words *in them* to
 refer to the directions foregoing, particularly
 those in the 13th verse, "'Till I come, give
 "attendance to reading, to exhortation, to
 "doctrine." The word doctrine (*Διδασκαλία*)
 does not merely signify the matter taught, but
 also the manner of teaching (so *Doddridge* in
locum) or, more properly, the act of teaching,
 i. e. the exercise of the office of the *Διδασκαλος*
 or teacher, the common name of a christian
 pastor, or minister, who is so called from the
 principal part of his office. We might, there-
 fore, consider it as including the whole exercise
 of the ministry, this part of the exhortation to
Timothy being like that which our apostle gives
Archippus in *Coloss.* iv. 17. "Take heed to
 "the ministry, which thou hast received in the
 "Lord, that thou fulfil it*." Upon the whole,
 then, the exhortation is to *take heed* †, to be
 attentive, and careful, both about himself, and
 the exercise of his ministry, and to persevere
 therein. We are not to live and act at random;

* ΒΛΕΠΕ ΤΗΝ ΔΑΚΟΥΙΑΝ κ, τ, λ.

† As the greek word ΕΠΕΧΕ, for which some M. SS.
 read ΠΡΟΣΕΧΕ, is properly enough rendered.

it requires consideration, caution and care, to behave like christians, and much more to discharge the important duties of the christian ministry. Give me leave, then, Sir, to remind you, that a minister should *take heed to himself*, should be attentive and careful about his temper, conduct, and character in general, as to morals, religion, prudence, and learning, or acquired furniture for the ministry.

I. Let him take heed to his *morals*. This, Sir, is the first and most necessary thing of all. An immoral christian is a contradiction in terms; but the contradiction is the most glaring in a christian minister: let him preach like an angel from heaven, it will be to no purpose, if he is notoriously vicious in his life. The language of his example will set aside that of his doctrine. If they who are to be the lights of the world, are darkness, how great that darkness! If they who are to be the salt of the earth, to season the minds of others, and preserve them from corruption, lose their favour, and become corrupt themselves, they are fit for nothing but to be trodden under foot, and treated with the utmost contempt. No assumed character can give a sanctity, nor should serve for a screen, to a wicked man. Your age, Sir, makes it necessary for you always to bear in mind the apostle's exhortation to *Timothy* (2 Ep. ii. 22.) to "flee youthful lusts," to be upon your guard against every temptation to passion, impurity, or intemperance. And not only guard against these vices themselves, but
avoid

avoid a fondness for feasts, entertainments, and diversions, where there is danger of coming *too near the bounds* of sobriety and decency, if you do not *transgress* them: such a conduct will lessen your character, though it may not destroy it. But I need not enlarge here, as I may venture to assert, that there is scarce any body of men in the world, equally numerous, with the regularly-educated dissenting ministers, that are more, or even equally, free from *sensual* vices. The loose, lewd, drunken, debauched minister will be at a loss to find support and countenance, among the Protestant dissenters.

But there are vices of another kind of which we may be more in danger, and which meet with more quarter from good people; because they are not so openly marked, and certainly known as the former; though equally unworthy of our character: and these are the vices of the *mind*; the meaner, more dark-complexioned vices; such as malevolence, and uncharitableness, slandering, falsehood, hypocrisy, avarice, and craft. A very celebrated modern * sceptic, has charged the christian ministry, with having a natural tendency to promote these vices in ministers. But granting, that the interested conduct of many who have born the name of christian ministers, has justly given scandal to the world, and that the *theologorum odia* have been proverbial; and granting that there are accidental circumstances attending our

* Mr. David Hume in his essay on national characters.
education,

education, or situation, which may have some tendency this way ; let us by our example confute the calumny, that such is the *natural, necessary* tendency of our office ; which, on the contrary, is, indeed, one of the most benevolent, generous, and god-like, that a creature can be employed in : and let us be the more careful to cherish the opposite virtues, which both the genius of christianity, and the nature of our office especially require of us. In the New Testament, even the *devil*, the worst of all Beings, receives that name † from slander or calumny, and falsehood of every kind, malice and covetousness are every where expressly condemned ; truth and love, charity and generosity every where recommended : and indeed the whole scheme of the Gospel is founded on divine truth and love.

Methinks, Sir, there is nothing I am more solicitous you should cherish, than that *Incoctum generoso pectus honesto* ||, which may set you habitually above every thing that is mean and base ; since by such things both the ministry and religion have been brought into great contempt, with some persons of polite education, and generous tempers ; who have been too ready to draw hasty, rash conclusions, or to admit such misrepresentations of sceptical writers as I have referred to.

Let us be continually revolving the perfect example of our divine Master, and his unparalleled benevolence ; and the amiable, though less perfect pattern of our apostle, whose genuine

† Διαβολος.

|| Pers. Sat. 2.

humility was remote from meanness, and whose disinterested zeal, generosity, and magnanimity knew no bounds. With him, let us utterly “ renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by the manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God; not as many, who corrupt” or adulterate “ the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God let us speak in *Christ*,” 2 *Cor.* iv. 2. and ii. 17. Let us attend to his animated exhortation to *Timothy*, in the close of this epistle, “ But thou, O man of God, flee these things,” viz. “ the love of money, that root of all evil,” and a concern to be rich; “ and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”

’Tis a divine aphorism of our celebrated poet,

An honest man’s the noblest work of God ||.

Will you bear with me, therefore, Sir, if, with great plainness, I entreat you, to labour always to maintain an unshaken honesty of heart, an inviolable integrity and honour. Let it govern your conduct in the *common affairs* of life; and then it will preserve you not only from directly infringing the laws of civil society, but from taking any advantage of their defects to serve your own interests: and let it govern your conduct as a *minister*. Then you will not aim, under

|| *Pope.*

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the sanction of that character, and with the advantages it may afford, to thrust yourself into people's wills, to the prejudice of their near relations. You will not be guilty of servilely worshipping the rich; of flattering their vices or weakness, their pride or ill humour, to secure their favour. You will not stoop to any little arts to lessen the reputation, or the congregations of your brethren, in order to increase your own. You will not betray the truths of religion, or the honor of your divine Master, for fear of offending men. Though I admit, you are not to give needless offence; and all truths are neither necessary nor fit to be spoken at all times; nevertheless, Sir, you will keep at the utmost distance from the baseness of suppressing, or quibbling with, doctrinal or practical truths, which in your own conscience you believe to be of importance, merely because they may disgust some of your hearers; for the very circumstance of their disrelish for them may render it the more needful for you sometimes to insist on them. Keep a good conscience, and be above the fear of men, which brings many a snare.

To touch briefly upon some other particulars under this head of *morals*. Your temper, Sir, I trust, will not let you give way to pride and haughtiness, insolence, austerity, and moroseness in domestic life, or towards the poorest of your flock: And I hope you will guard against admitting into your breast that *love of power*, which might tempt you to usurp upon the rights and religious liberties of your people, or
those

those of your brethren in the ministry. For my part, I know of no power we have as ministers, but to do all the good we can. Do not injure the reputation of others, any more than their property; and shun falling in with the common, though diabolical practice of slandering and backbiting.

But a minister's morals should not consist in mere *negatives*. He should be an example of all the private and social virtues that adorn the christian name and character; of strict integrity, veracity, and fidelity; of disinterested friendship, unaffected courtesy and condescension; of modesty, and humility, purity and temperance; of diffusive benevolence and charity, and of amiable tenderness in every social relation: in short, Sir, take his character, in which the moral part, you will see, is chiefly insisted on, from *St. Paul*, in this epistle, ch. iii. 2—7. and ch. iv. 12. and in that to *Titus*, ch. i. 7, 8. "A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife," i. e. I apprehend, who has not been divorced from one wife, and married another, which was lawful, but disreputable among both the Jews and Heathens of those times; he must be "vigilant, sober, of good behaviour," or modest, "given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker," that is, not ready to quarrel, like men in liquor; "not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity:

“ not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride,
 “ he fall into the condemnation of the devil.
 “ Moreover he must have a good report of
 “ them that are without, lest he fall into re-
 “ proach, and the snare of the devil.” The
 passage in *Titus* is much the same; “ A bishop
 “ must be blameless, as the steward of God:
 “ not self-willed, not soon angry, not given
 “ to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lu-
 “ cre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of
 “ good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;
 “ holding fast the faithful word.” And the
 charge to *Timothy* in this chapter, is, “ Be
 “ thou an example to the believers, in word,
 “ in conversation, or behaviour, in charity, in
 “ spirit, in faith, in purity.” Such, Sir,
 should be the exemplary *morals* of a christian
 minister; on which having dwelt so largely, I
 shall be more concise in treating of other par-
 ticulars: as for instance,

II. Next to his morals, a minister should
 take heed to his *religion*. To be, like *Barna-
 bas*, a good man, is absolutely necessary to being
 a good minister; though I will not say it al-
 ways is so, to being an acceptable, popular
 preacher. A minister of religion without any
 religion, is so gross a solecism, that, though
 some are chargeable with it, none are hardy
 enough to defend it. The point I am now
 upon may, perhaps, be thought to be included
 under the former head; as morality and religion
 are looked upon by many to be equivalent: but
 I think they are properly to be distinguished;
 since

since religion signifies a suitable regard in our temper and conduct, to the great and blessed God; which is sometimes totally wanting in persons, who are not very defective in their morals: and, on the other hand, though religion implies good morals, it is not always accompanied with them, in those that profess religion: and we are not to look upon every one as absolutely an hypocrite in his pretences to religion, who is culpable in his morals; because multitudes have wrong notions of religion, and embrace it as a salvo for their neglect of moral duties; and so indeed are the worse for their religion; the worse men, as the more zealous christians. Wretched abuse of heaven's best gift! fatal consequence of the false views in which religion is too often represented! But I know, Sir, you have juster notions of that religion which came from heaven, to fit us for and raise us to heaven; which lays its foundation in the filial fear and love of God, and faith in *Christ*; and purifies the heart; and brings forth the fruits of evangelical holiness, and universal righteousness; which does not supersede, but enforces the obligations of morality, and invigorates the practice of it; which renders us better men, the better christians we are. This, Sir, is the religion you will preach to others; and which it is highly necessary you should experience and practise yourself: I hope, and trust you do: I have all the reason to think you do that a fellow-creature can have: but God alone knows the heart; and he expects
you

you to be really and exemplarily religious. For you are not placed in the church as an index, or *Mercury*, merely to point out to your people the way to heaven; but you are as their shepherd to go before them, and conduct them thither.

It becomes you, therefore, to take heed to your religion,

1st, That it be *real* and *sincere*. The appearance of it a dissenting minister must have, or he can entertain no prospect of acceptance or countenance in his office. And consider, Sir, how difficult it will be for him always to keep on a mask, to appear constantly in disguise, and avoid betraying himself in some unguarded hour, and becoming justly exposed to universal contempt. How irksome and painful, to have his conscience continually flying in his face, and charging him with a total neglect of that piety and devotion, which he is every sabbath, at least, recommending to others! Or, if he can, at length, acquire a conscience seared enough to make himself easy here, while he is in the vigor of life and health, consider, dear Sir, how gloomy will be his dying bed, and how dreadful his condemnation hereafter, for having carried on a vile imposture, and been guilty through life of the most solemn mockery of God and man! Consider, also, how difficult it must be for a minister, who has not a real sense of religion upon his heart, and a thorough experimental acquaintance with it, to perform the duties of his office with any life and spirit, if with any propriety! How should he

he be in earnest in persuading others "to be reconciled to God," who is not reconciled to God himself? How should he describe the grace of God, in its salutary effects, who has not "tasted that the Lord is gracious?" How should he display the love of *Christ*, who has never felt its constraining influence? How should he encourage his hearers to confide in the divine promises, who has never known their supporting influence? How can he recommend those holy precepts of christianity, which he has never obeyed? How can he describe, with any propriety, those pious dispositions, those exercises of inward heart-religion, those lineaments of the divine image formed in the soul of which he knows nothing, unless at second-hand? How can he urge with becoming pathos, in his public preaching, the terrors, the hopes, the joys of the world to come, the power of which he has never felt? And, what a cold, awkward, embarrassed, uncomfortable figure must a minister, without sentiments of real religion make, when called to attend the beds of the sick and dying? In short, how can he adapt his discourses, with propriety and energy, to subjects to which his heart is a stranger, or, to which it is averse? And, the reflection recurs, how wretched a slavery, to be obliged to be continually conversing with subjects, for which he not only has no taste and relish, but which continually bear witness to his guilt, and make him live in a course of perpetual self-condemnation! Take heed, Sir, above all things, that

“ after preaching to others, you do not prove
“ a cast-away,” or rejected of God yourself;
that you may not have reason to say, “ other
“ men’s vineyards I have kept, but my own
“ vineyard I have not kept.”

But a minister, to be an *honest* man, which
I have already supposed him, must be a man of
real religion: I therefore add, further,

2dly, Take heed to your religion, that it be
eminent and *exemplary*. It is expected of mini-
sters, that they should excell in piety and good-
ness: and though the world may expect too
much from us, considering we are but men,
men of like passions and infirmities with others;
yet, certainly, there is just reason to expect,
that those who teach others, should themselves
excel in what they teach; that the leaders of an
army should have higher qualifications, more
experience, practice, and resolution, than may
be necessary in every private man. So it is,
certainly, with justice our people expect, that
their ministers, whose grand business is to in-
culcate religion upon them, should be eminent
for religion themselves; that their pastors, and
leaders, who are at the head of their congrega-
tions, and whose office it is, to guide them in
the way to heaven, should set them a bright ex-
ample of a heavenly conversation. It is, in
short, highly reasonable, and it is also highly
necessary, if we would be respected and useful,
that we should not rest contented with common
attainments, but should “ covet earnestly the
“ best gifts” and graces, and endeavour to ex-
cel

cel in faith and holiness, and virtue; and be examples to believers, not only of a sincere, solid, and rational, but, also, of an exalted, and fervent piety. I shall just add,

3dly, Take heed, Sir, that you *improve* in religion: if you do not, you will soon find it sadly decline. There is no medium here. If a sense of religion does not habitually strengthen and improve in the soul, it will gradually weaken and languish, and lose almost all its power and influence upon the heart and life. I must freely tell you, Sir, that you had need to be very solicitous and greatly upon your guard in this respect; for your office, though it preserves you from many temptations, to which other stations of life are exposed, has some peculiar to itself. A grand one is, that continually conversing with the things of religion, and reading *pro* and *con*, *ex officio*, renders them familiar to the mind; and is very apt to take off, much of that reverence for them we had before, and to make them less impressive upon the heart than they were at first. If you have already found this by experience in some degree, you will see the necessity of guarding the more against it: to which purpose, Sir, I would recommend it to you, sometimes to forget that you are a minister; or, however, always to remember that you are a christian, as well as a minister; who have, yourself, a soul to save, which is in the same danger, and must be saved in the same way, as the souls of those to whom you preach; and that consequently you must take the utmost

care not to suffer the duties of your *particular* calling, as a *minister*, to make you remiss in those of your *general* calling, as a *christian*. Be sure to keep up a constant application to the throne of grace; be steady in the daily practice of serious, secret devotion. And, especially, Sir, let your Lord's-day-evenings be always sacred to religious retirement; in which you may enter closely into your own heart; read and meditate upon the Scriptures, and apply them to yourself, for reproof, correction, instruction, or comfort; and pour out your soul with freedom and fervor to your heavenly Father, the Father of lights, and the God of all grace. And, instead of dwelling much, in your private meditations (any more than I could wish you to do in your public ministrations) upon the deep, difficult, controversial parts of religion; be often revolving in your mind, and fixing yourself more firmly in the belief of, the certainty and importance of the plain, fundamental principles, laws, and facts of natural and revealed religion. Be often thinking, Sir, of the universal presence and providence of God; of his glorious power, and majesty, and holiness, and purity; of the great work of redemption, and the wonderful love of *Christ*; of death and eternity; of heaven and hell; of the solemn appearance at the judgement-seat of *Christ*, and the righteous retribution; of the everlasting happiness of all good men, and the unfading crown that shall adorn every faithful minister. Keep these things, Sir, constantly in view, and they

they will make you serious, and be greatly the means of your improving in *personal* religion.

From which I pass to spend a few words,

III. On *prudence*, which, though ranked, in ethical systems, among the cardinal virtues, we usually distinguish from religion and morality; and as thus distinguished, prudence, Sir, implies behaving with decency and propriety; agreeably to our character and office; so as not to give offence, or to obstruct our usefulness and comfort. Prudence is of great importance in life; for the troubles of life proceed more from the thoughtlessness, indiscretion, and wrong-headedness of men, than from direct malice and wickedness; and it is to none of more importance than to christian ministers, especially dissenting ministers. The well-known maxim, "*Nullum numen abest, si sit prudentia* *," has indeed a tincture of heathenism, as well as poetic boldness; but the blessed *Jesus* himself has required his ministers to be, not only "harmless as doves, but also, wise, or prudent (*Φρονιμοι*) as serpents."

You will reflect, Sir, how many a fine genius has been quite lost to the world, and to the church, for want of prudence; how many a worthy, well-meaning, able, and zealous minister, for want of this, has lessened his character and usefulness; set churches in flames; made his friends his foes; and plunged himself into seas of trouble, and sorrow, and difficulty. You cannot but be convinced, Sir, of

* *Juvenal*, Sat. 10.

the *need* of prudence. The *way to acquire it* is much easier to some tempers than to others: however, all may attain it in a considerable degree, by prayer to him who gives wisdom liberally to them that ask it, by consideration and experience: but the ground-work of prudence, Sir, must be laid in humility, meekness, and patience. Do not think too highly of yourself, and too meanly of others. Do not let your own importance be always in your view. Do not arrogate too much deference to your judgment, nor too much respect to your person, upon account of your office. Do not be captious, and quick to take offence at fancied, or, even real neglects. Never decide, resolve, nor act hastily, precipitately, and while your passions are moved, in affairs of any moment; but take time for cool deliberation; and be quick to retract, instead of eager to defend a mistake. Do not be busy in your people's temporal affairs; nor officious in prying into their secrets; much less guilty of betraying them. Take care, Sir, not to fall into the mischievous, though common practice of gossiping; and be not severe upon the characters of others, since you will be sure to have it returned with interest. In your dress, your common conversation and recreations, attend to what is expedient, and of good report, as well as what is lawful; and do not affect to *despise* the prejudices of weak brethren; for that is not the spirit of a christian minister. Study good manners and affability, Sir, in your whole behaviour; but let them be tempered with gra-

vity and dignity. Be chearful and good humoured, but not the fiddle of a company. Be not a recluse, nor yet the too frequent visitor; nor the man of leisure, always ready to fill a place at table, or in a party of pleasure; this, Sir, will let you down in the esteem, even, of those who seem fond of your company. But I proceed to add once more,

IVthly, Attend, Sir, to your *learning*, or *acquired furniture* for the ministry. Good natural parts, genius, memory, voice, and the grace of God, which are all his gifts, are necessary and presupposed to fitness for the ministry: But there is other furniture, also necessary, which is to be acquired by education and industry. Learning, though it cannot give either genius, or religion, can improve both: and, though it cannot of itself make a good minister, no man can be thoroughly furnished for the ministry without it. It would be an affront, Sir, both to you, and to this audience, for me to attempt a laboured proof of the importance of learning to a minister of the Gospel. How preposterous would it have been judged by all, for a man to have appeared as a counsellor at law, while our laws were in Latin, who was ignorant of that language! And is it not as absurd, for a man to take upon him to be a public expounder of the laws of God, who is ignorant of the languages in which they were written, and must wholly rely for the sense of the sacred code, not upon the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, but upon the interpretation of those words by fallible

lible men? A critical skill, therefore, in the sacred languages, which requires the knowledge of other learned languages, is a qualification by no means to be dispensed with in a christian minister, whose office will lead him to explain both the Old and the New Testament. And to skill in the languages must be joined, an extensive knowledge of antiquity, in which I include profane, and sacred, or ecclesiastical history, with the opinions of the heathen philosophers and christian fathers; and the knowledge of natural and moral philosophy. As the external evidences of christianity arise chiefly from prophecies and miracles, how will a man be able to manage the argument from the accomplishment of prophecies, who is not well acquainted with the history of the nations to which they relate *? Or, how should he press the argument from miracles, which are interruptions of the course of nature, who is not acquainted with her laws? And as to the internal evidences of christianity; how can he represent the congruity of its doctrines and institutions with the divine perfections, and the reason of things, who is not well grounded in the principles of ethics, and of natural religion? Study carefully, Sir, the works of God in creation and providence; for they speak in part the same language as his written word. Their's is, indeed, the divine word that has gone out

* What service has Dr. *Newton* (the present worthy bishop of *Bristol*) lately done to the christian cause, by an happy application of the lights of history to this point?

through

through all the earth. A close study of nature, especially of human nature, will lead to nature's God; will enlarge and exalt the mind, and prepare it for judging of the evidences, and discovering the beauty, of the grand scheme of the redemption and recovery of this lost world, which God made. The study of the mathematics, logic, oratory, poetry, and the Latin and Greek classics in general, is necessary to improve the judgment and reasoning powers, to enrich the imagination, to form the taste, and help you to acquire a good method of composition, and a proper, yet animated and flowing style. There are other branches of learning and knowledge, with which it is proper a minister should cultivate some general acquaintance, in order to attain an extensive and accurate understanding of the Scriptures; since there are references in them to almost all the subjects of the arts and sciences.

While therefore you remember that the *Scriptures* are to be your daily and constant study, you will regard other studies chiefly as means to facilitate your knowledge of the scriptures. And if there are some branches of learning not immediately necessary to the understanding of the Scriptures, yet even they may be profitably cultivated in a moderate degree, by way of amusement (for some amusement a minister will want as well as other men) and also as an ornament to your character, and a means of procuring you esteem in the present age, when a general acquaintance with most parts of learning

learning is so common. Your diligence and proficiency, Sir, in your academical studies, was such as did you credit, and gave me much satisfaction; and I am persuaded you are not only sensible of the importance of learning, but have contracted that taste for it, that you will be desirous of making further improvements. This you will find highly necessary; as an academical course can only lay a proper groundwork, which should be built upon through life.

And you will give me leave, Sir, to remind you, that in this place you succeed a minister †, who was not only revered and beloved for his piety and goodness, but distinguished for his great learning; an animating motive to you to endeavour after similar attainments.

That you may not be at a loss for time, or be tempted to employ too much of it this way, I would advise you, Sir, to devote two mornings of the week, and steadily apply them to the prosecution of your literary studies; while you spend the rest in more immediate preparation for your public work. You will richly find your account in such general reading; as it will extend your thoughts, correct your judgment, improve your temper, furnish you with a copia of matter and expression, and give an *originality, variety, and vigor* to your compositions; which will be but dry, meagre, dull, copies of other mens thoughts, if you confine yourself to mere theological studies, and the reading of sermons, with a direct view to re-

† The Rev. Dr. Henry Miles, F. R. S.

ceive assistance from them in composing for the pulpit.

Thus, Sir, have I largely pursued the first part of the apostle's direction, to "take heed to *yourself*," as a *christian*, and as a *minister*; that is, with respect to your *morals*, *religion*, *prudence*, and *learning*.

It may perhaps have been expected, that I should also consider the latter part of the advice, "*take heed to thy doctrine*," or to your *preaching*, and the *other branches of the ministerial office*. Seriously attend to the discharge of your ministry, in such a manner as to be most useful therein; which may relate to *preparation* for it and the *actual exercise* of it. But the former having taken up so much of your time, and as what I have now mentioned would open so large a field, I shall wave the consideration of it.

And indeed I look upon it, that what has been already insisted on is of much the greatest importance; that to be a learned, wise and good man, are the grand qualifications and preparatives for being a useful minister; that the best preparation for pulpit *compositions* is *sapere*, to *understand* your subject; and the best rule for *delivering* them, to *feel* it. The rest is to be learnt as other professions are, and is learnt in our seminaries, where, Sir, you have had ample and particular directions, relating to the discharge of the several branches of your ministry; and have profited by them, so as to meet with much acceptance, and to have the prospect of being very useful. And as you have those

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directions by you, for your perusal, I hope you will continue to improve by them and improve upon them. And you will do well, Sir, to join with them such excellent, printed treatises, as Mr. *Mason's* Student and Pastor, an ordination charge of his, published in the form of a letter to a friend, entering on the ministerial office, Dr. *Watts's* Humble attempt, Bishop *Burnet's* Pastoral care, *Jennings* on preaching *Christ* and experimental preaching, the abridgment of *Baxter's* Reformed Pastor, and some others, which should be always at hand, and read so frequently as to be rendered quite familiar. For the real usefulness of such rules, Sir, you will observe, like those of rhetoric and the laws of poetry, results from their being considered, and digested, and applied in our reading and observation of the works, or conduct of others, 'till they form our taste, give our minds and tempers their proper cast, and come to enter habitually and imperceptibly into our composition or behaviour; for if either appear artificial, it will never be acceptable.

As a studied behaviour in company will be formal and ungracious, so he who sets down to compose a discourse with a heap of rules before him, to be continually turned to as he proceeds, may indeed escape those faults which might make an audience laugh, but I will answer for it, he will make none of them weep, he will touch no affections; sleep perchance many may.

Instead

Instead therefore of *particular* directions, let me exhort you in the *general*; to give yourself wholly and in earnest to the work of the ministry, as you have now professed to do; to be serious, conscientious, faithful, evangelical and practical in your private preparations, and in your public ministrations; and to follow your public labours with fervent prayer for the divine blessing to give them success, and with private instructions, as opportunities may offer, and above all, with shewing the influence of your doctrine upon your own heart and life.

If, Sir, you thus prosecute your work with diligence and perseverance, you will “*save your own soul*,” and be an instrument of “*saving*” some, perhaps *many* of the souls of “*them that hear you*.” And do you consider the *worth* of *souls*, of *immortal* souls, made in the image of God, and redeemed by the blood of the Son of God? And will you think much of the labour, self-denial and difficulty attending the ministry? Will you not readily spend and be spent in such a service? Are you not glowing with holy ardor, to be an instrument in the divine hand of saving the souls of your hearers? especially, Sir, if you take in the awful consideration, that this is absolutely *necessary*, in the station and office you have taken upon you, to *your own* salvation. Permit me therefore, as the conclusion of the whole, my reverend and dear *brother*, to remind you of our apostle’s solemn words to *Timothy*, in the close both of this and of the 2d Epistle, and

to

to leave them as a sacred bond upon your soul.
 * "I charge you before God and the Lord
 " *Jesus Christ*, who shall judge the quick and
 " the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom;
 " preach the word, be instant in season, out of
 " season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all
 " long-suffering and doctrine. Watch thou
 " in all things, endure afflictions, do the work
 " of a gospel-minister, fulfil thy ministry."
 And † again, "O man of God, flee" the en-
 " ticements of this world, "and follow after
 " righteousness, godliness, faith, love, pa-
 " tience, meekness. Fight the good fight of
 " faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto
 " thou art also called, and hast profest a good
 " profession before many witnesses. I give
 " thee charge in the sight of God who quick-
 " eneth all things, and before *Christ Jesus*,
 " who before *Pontius Pilate* witnessed a good
 " profession, that thou keep this command-
 " ment without spot, unrebukeable, until the
 " appearing of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, which
 " in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed
 " and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and
 " Lord of Lords; who only hath immortality,
 " dwelling in the light, which no man can
 " approach unto, whom no man hath seen,
 " nor can see; to whom be honour and power
 " everlasting. Amen."

* 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 5.

† 1 Tim. vi. 11-16.

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THE END.



